

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Grade-Level Expectations, Model Curricula, and the Future of the State Assessments**

### **1. How do the new Grade-Level Expectations relate to the state assessments and how should local educators use them?**

Hundreds of Missouri educators participated in the development of the new Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) for communication arts, mathematics, science and social studies. The GLEs explicate the Show-Me Standards, providing specific targets for instruction. The communication arts and mathematics GLEs are complete and available on the DESE Web site. The science and social studies GLEs will be in final form by spring of 2004.

The Department is using the communication arts and mathematics GLEs to develop the 2006 (and beyond) grade-level assessments for these subjects. We also plan to use the science GLEs to inform the development of the science assessments to be given in 2008 (and beyond). District personnel should compare their existing curricula with the GLEs, making adjustments as they deem appropriate.

Department staff and the GLE committees are currently creating glossaries and examples/elaborations to support local educators' use of the GLEs. In addition, the GLEs will serve as the measurable learner objectives for the model curricula currently being developed. DESE staff offered a series of regional workshops on the GLEs during the fall of 2003, and we are planning a series of in-depth, follow-up sessions for the fall of 2004.

### **2. What is happening with respect to development of model state curricula?**

The Department has convened a large number of Missouri educators to assist with the development of a model curriculum for communication arts. State and regional teams, working in collaboration with the MAP Regional Facilitators, are meeting regularly to write units, which they will then pilot with their students and revise based on try-out results as well as on feedback from external reviewers. We intend to post drafts of these units on our Web site (starting in late spring of 2004) in order to solicit comments and recommendations.

We began work on the communication arts model curriculum in the summer of 2003, and we will complete work on this project in late summer 2005. We will begin development of the model curriculum for mathematics in April 2004, with completion slated for winter/spring 2006. We also plan to start work on a model curriculum for science in late 2005, assuming funding is available.

Each model curriculum will be based on its respective set of Grade-Level Expectations. The models will include teaching strategies/activities, formative assessments (including teacher questions), summative assessments and resources.

### **3. How will the state assessment program change as a result of NCLB?**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandates that state assessment systems meet the following requirements. Thus, to comply with NCLB, Missouri's assessment program must

- include annual measures of student learning in mathematics and reading/language arts at grades 3-8 and at a high-school grade (by 2005-2006 school year),
- include annual measures of learning in science at an elementary grade, a middle-school grade, and a high-school grade (by 2007-2008 school year),
- be the same coherent, technically sound system used to measure the achievement of all students,
- assess higher-order thinking skills and understanding of challenging content,
- be valid and accessible for use with the widest possible range of students,
- provide alternate assessments for students whose disabilities preclude their participation in "regular" assessments,
- report results in terms of achievement levels that are referenced to the Show-Me Standards,
- provide for disaggregation of results for multiple subgroups of students, and
- report results no later than the beginning of the next school year.

To meet NCLB requirements, the Department is developing new grade-level assessments in communication arts and mathematics and refining the existing tests for these subjects to create an "expanded" system. We will administer this complete set of communication arts and mathematics assessments for the first time in the spring of 2006. Staff members are also re-considering the grade placement of the required grade-span science assessments and are seeking input from Missouri educators about various options. The attached time line, *What's Ahead for the MAP?*, presents the schedule for bringing the assessment program into compliance with NCLB.

The new grade-level communication arts and mathematics assessments will be just as rigorous as the current grade-span tests, although they will be slightly shorter instruments. The communication arts tests for grades 3, 7 and 11 will continue to include multiple-choice and constructed-response items as well as performance events, while these tests for grades 4, 5, 6 and 8 will include only multiple-choice and constructed-response items. Similarly, the mathematics tests for grades 4, 8 and 10 will continue to include multiple-choice and constructed-response items as well as performance events, while these tests for grades 3, 5, 6 and 7 will include only multiple-choice and constructed-response items.

**4. Will the definition of proficiency on state assessments change? Will the number of achievement levels change?**

Our current definitions for proficiency for the grade-span tests are consistent with the challenging content and processes reflected in the Show-Me Standards. In the spring of 2003, after many months of discussion and debate, the State Board of Education reaffirmed the achievement levels and decided not to alter our definition of proficiency for the 2004 and 2005 administrations. However, we will revisit the achievement levels and the related definitions of proficiency for the new/revised communication arts and mathematics assessments. We plan to convene standard-setting panels in the fall of 2005 to establish achievement levels for these tests.

We currently report state assessment results in terms of five achievement levels: step 1, progressing, nearing proficiency, proficient, and advanced. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) designates performance as advanced, proficient, basic, or below basic. We are presently talking with our technical advisors as well as with educators from across the state about how many levels we should adopt for the new grade-level tests. We have not yet made a decision on this issue, but we must reach one by the fall of 2005, when the standard-setting panels meet.

**5. What is the status of the state science and social studies assessments?**

Because of budget cuts, we have not been able to fund a required administration of the science or social studies assessments since spring 2002. Many districts gave these assessments voluntarily in spring 2003 and will do so again in spring 2004. The status of the science and social studies assessments in 2005 is uncertain because funding to support these tests is not currently in the proposed FY 2005 state budget. NCLB requires each state to administer science assessments at the elementary, middle- and high-school levels no later than the 2007-2008 school year, so we must obtain funding for these tests by that time.